

ARCURI LEADS BI-PARTISAN FIGHT TO IMPROVE SAFETY ON RURAL ROADS

Cites Alarming Accident Rates in Call to Action

Wednesday, June 17, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Michael Arcuri (NY-24) led a bi-partisan group of 21 Members of Congress in calling on the leadership of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to increase funding for improving the safety of rural roads in the United States.

"We have seen a significant rise in the rate of fatal accidents on rural roads that are far less traveled in rural areas than that of roads in suburban and urban areas," **Arcuri said**, "We need immediate action to stop this disturbing trend and the Federal government must be an active partner in funding safety improvements on our most dangerous roads - whether they are state, county or local roads."

54% of traffic fatalities nationwide occur on rural roads, even though rural roads account for only 35% of vehicle miles traveled. Created in 2005, the High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) Program gives federal assistance for safety improvements on rural two-lane roads that are not otherwise eligible for state or federal funding.

Prior funding for the HRRR program has been limited - only \$90 million annually, nationwide. In addition, concerns have been raised that flexibility in the current program has allowed states to only fund improvements on rural state-owned roads. Congress will reauthorize funding this year for all major surface transportation programs, which will direct hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding to critical transportation projects across the country during the next six years.

This week Arcuri called on Chairman James Oberstar and Ranking Member John Mica of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, as well as Chairman Peter DeFazio and Ranking Member John Duncan of the T&I Committee's Highways and Transit Subcommittee, urging them to include significantly increased funding for improving rural road safety in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. The letter also requests that the legislation establish performance-based guidelines that will direct funding to the most dangerous rural roads, regardless of whether a state or a local entity owns the roadway.

Members of the House of Representatives from Upstate New York to sign onto Arcuri's letter include:

U.S. Rep. John McHugh (NY-23), U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey (NY-22), U.S. Rep. Dan Maffei (NY-25), U.S. Rep. Eric Massa (NY-29) and U.S. Rep. John Hall (NY-19).

*****Please find the pdf version of the Arcuri Letter attached*****

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